

RELIGION AND POLITICS: BISHOPS SPEAK WITH CLARITY

When the bishops recently assembled in Colorado, they overwhelmingly approved a policy statement on “Catholics in Political Life.” Presented on June 18, the position that the bishops staked out on what to do about pro-abortion Catholic politicians was greeted with enthusiasm by the Catholic League.

From our point of view, the bishops spoke with convincing clarity on the subject of politics and religion. Though there are many public policy issues that Catholics are rightfully concerned about, none is more important than the killing of innocent human life. That is why this statement, which gives priority to abortion, is so important: it says that issues like the minimum wage are morally inferior to abortion. As a corollary, it also suggests that shutting down a soup kitchen is not morally analogous to shutting down an abortion clinic. That this even needs to be said shows how morally bankrupt many Americans, including Catholics, have become.

The statement also shows due respect for the autonomy of the bishops. The question of denying Holy Communion to pro-abortion politicians is something every bishop should decide for himself. It needs to be said that it is one thing to get the bishops to agree on the immorality of abortion—that’s easy—but it is quite another to get a group this large to agree on the right remedy for lawmakers who violate this teaching.

The Catholic League was delighted to learn that the statement dealt directly with Catholic institutions that honor pro-abortion public figures. For too long, Catholic colleges and universities have bestowed honors on those who have worked overtime to advocate abortion rights, including partial-birth

abortion. They would never honor someone associated with anti-Semitism or racism, but when it comes to abortion, too many have let radical feminists on the faculty rule the day.

The bishops also did not dodge the phony argument over church and state. "The separation of church and state does not require division between belief and public action, between moral principles and political choices, but protects the right of believers and religious groups to practice their faith and act on their values in public life," is how the bishops put it.

"That remark," we told the media, "is cogently written and without a single flaw." Our recommendation was, "It should be widely disseminated to public officials and the law schools."